



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 January 2021 by Ifeanyi Chukwujekwu BSc MSc MIEMA
CEnv AssocRTPI

Decision by Chris Preston BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/20/3261767

The Hemmel, Beal Bank, Warkworth NE65 0TA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Paul Hardisty against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01940/FUL, dated 27 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 11 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is construction of single-storey dining room within courtyard.
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Decision

The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

1. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

2. The effect of the proposed dining room upon the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

3. The Hemmel is a U-shaped single storey former agricultural building which has been converted to a residential dwelling. It is accessed via a private road off the coastal route known as Beal Bank and is bounded on all sides by open green landscape.
4. The proposed dining room would be located within the enclosed courtyard at the rear. Given this enclosure, the distance from Beal Bank and absence of neighbouring properties, the proposed single storey rear extension would not be visible from any public vantage point and any impact on the visual appearance of the host property would be minimal.
5. The Council contends that converted building has historic and architectural merit but have not provided any demonstrable evidence in that regard. The property has already been modified and there is no evidence before me to suggest that the original farmhouse was of any value.

6. The courtyard in which the proposed dining would be situated already has existing structures such as a pergola and barbeque which cannot be said to pertain to anything of the original form. Thus, the introduction of a centralised dining extension which would be subordinate to the host property in height, depth and massing would not be unduly prominent in this location. It would not be a more dominant feature than the existing structures within the courtyard, which it would replace.
7. Notwithstanding the Council's suggestion of a principle of rarely supporting extensions to barn conversions due to the subsequent impact on the character of the host building. Just because there is a perceived element of harm doesn't mean there is actual harm.
8. I find that the proposed construction of single-storey dining room within the courtyard would not be visually harmful and would not have a detrimental effect upon the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area. Accordingly, I find no conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), Policies S16 of Alnwick District Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2007) (the CS), BE8/Appendix B of Alnwick District Wide Local Plan (1997) (the Local Plan) and HOU 8 and QOP 1 of the draft Northumberland Local Plan (2019) (the DNLP).
9. These policies seek amongst other things to ensure that all development achieve a high standard of design, reflecting local character and distinctiveness in traditional or contemporary design and materials, and that any extension or other householder development should be within the curtilage of the existing property and is incidental and subordinate to the existing dwelling in size and massing, uses appropriate materials and would not have an adverse impact on the open character of the area.

Conditions

10. Other than the statutory condition relating to the commencement of work it is necessary, in the interests of clarity, to attach conditions to ensure that the development is constructed in accordance with the plans submitted with the application as well as materials specified in these plans.

Conclusion and Recommendation

11. For the reasons given above and having had regard to evidence before me, I recommend that the appeal should be allowed.

Ifeanyi Chukwujekwu

APPEALS PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

12. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and, having regard to the evidence presented, including photographic evidence taken on the site visit, I disagree with the recommendation for the following reasons.

Character and Appearance

13. As described above, the property relates to a converted barn which is now in residential use. The conversion has successfully retained a significant amount of the original external character of the property. The C-shaped floor plan has been retained, the stonework has been sympathetically retained/ restored and the window and door openings largely reflect the arrangement of the original property. The stone wall encloses what would have been the fold yard/ midden in central section. Whilst the garden is clearly domesticated with some minor structures such as the pergola, the enclosed space is free from any significant development and the original form and function of the space can clearly be appreciated.
14. Consequently, I agree with the Council that the building has historical interest on account of its form and design which is reflective of the agricultural origins of the building. The simple form and symmetry of the buildings, set around the central space, also provides a pleasing and attractive façade, which sits comfortably in the rural landscape. For the reasons given, the space within the yard area is integral to that character.
15. The Council has referred to guidance from Historic England which identifies that overtly domestic extensions are alien in character and will rarely work successfully in the context of historic farm buildings. In my experience that aligns with widely recognised good practice where the aim of such conversions is to secure the future use of the building in a manner that retains as much of the original form and character as possible, as reflected in the requirements of policy HOU8 of the DNLP.
16. The proposed extension would occupy space within the yard that would historically have been free from any significant built development. For that reason alone, the proposed structure would appear at odds with the original function of the space. The sizeable structure would not reflect the historic C-shaped plan and would visibly disrupt the symmetry that presently exists, impairing the ability to appreciate the original form of the building/ yard.
17. In addition, the proposed design does have an overtly domestic character. Although the materials would reflect those of the original building the shallow/ flat roof with glazed atrium would not reflect the form or style of the converted barn. It would therefore appear as an alien addition on account of its appearance and position. I recognise that modern design is often used when extending historical buildings in order to make a clear contrast between the original and new structure. However, whilst that may be successful in some settings, I am not satisfied that introducing a structure of a clearly domestic style is appropriate in the context of the agrarian character of the original barn.
18. I note reference to extensions approved to agricultural buildings elsewhere within the local area. However, the design of those proposals appears to be distinctly different to the design of the current scheme. The extension in Chatton had a linear form, replicating the original building in terms of its proportions and roof pitch. The extension to the Granary at Northfield Farm in Warkworth was clearly designed to contrast with the original building but, nonetheless, had a roof profile akin to a more modern agricultural structure which could be read as an addition to the barn whilst retaining a flavour of the original use. I am not satisfied that the proposal in this instance has similar characteristics for the reasons given. Moreover, neither of those schemes

involved development within an enclosed yard and the relationship with the external space does not appear similar to the current appeal site.

19. The proposed glazed link would off-set the structure slightly from the main building which would be retained but that would not mitigate against the visual impact of the substantial structure or compensate for erosion of the functional relationship between the yard and the barn. The extension would be enclosed within the yard and not visible from wider public vantage points. Nonetheless, paragraph 127(c) of the Framework requires all development to be sympathetic to local character and history and those aims are reflected in policy S16 of the CS and policies HOU8 and QOP1 of the DNLP. Irrespective of public views, and the harm to the character and appearance of the building is a matter to which I attach significant weight.
20. Thus, for the reasons given, I find that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the original building and the associated external space. It follows that the development is contrary to the design related aims of policy S16 of the CS, policies HOU8 and QOP1 of the DNLP, policy BE8 of the Local Plan and paragraph 127 of the Framework.
21. I recognise that the appellant has put a significant amount of work into restoring the building but that does not justify an addition that would be harmful to the original character. No material considerations have been put forward that would outweigh that harm and I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Chris Preston

INSPECTOR